

10/537392ELECTRON BEAM TUBES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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This invention relates to electron beam tubes, and particularly to linear beam devices.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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Linear beam devices are employed in order to amplify signals at high frequencies by modulating an electron beam.

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Examples of such devices are klystrons and Inductive Output Tubes (IOTs). Such devices are typically employed as the final stage of amplification in television transmitters at frequencies within the UHF range (470 to 800 MHz). A typical linear beam device comprises an

20 electron gun for generating a beam of electrons, an RF interaction region, for example a series of drift tubes, where amplification of an RF signal takes place and a collector for dissipating the electron beam after it has left the RF interaction region. Amplification of the

25 signal takes place within a vacuum envelope.

Such devices may be of the so-called external cavity type, in which the vacuum envelope comprises a plurality of ceramic cylinders attached to metal structures, for

30 example mounting plates provided on drift tube assemblies.

A problem that may be encountered with such devices is that changes in temperature in the device can give rise to mechanical stress between components of the tube.

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It has been proposed to alleviate such problems by the inclusion of so-called balance rings, usually of ceramic, which reduce such thermal stresses. However, it has been found that, in certain conditions, even with the inclusion of balance rings, thermal stresses may be significant and may even cause damage to the ceramic walls defining the vacuum envelope.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention is defined in the claims to which reference is now directed.

The invention permits relative radial movement of components of the tube, in order to alleviate stress produced by differential thermal expansion between the components. The invention includes means arranged to produce relative sliding movement in the form of a member interposed between the components. This arrangement maintains the integrity of the vacuum envelope.

The member may be annular, in order to correspond to the shape of the walls defining the vacuum envelope.

Preferably, the member includes material arranged to reduce friction between the components.

In an embodiment one of the components may include a portion of the ceramic wall forming part of the vacuum envelope. The other component may be part of a drift tube, such as the mounting plate.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

The invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

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Figure 1: is a partly sectional schematic side view of a prior art electron beam tube;

Figure 1a: illustrates in more detail the portion of Figure 1 circled by a broken line;

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Figure 2: is a partly sectional side view of an electron beam tube constructed according to the invention; and

Figure 2a: illustrates in more detail the portion of Figure 2 circled by a broken line.

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DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the specification.

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Figures 1 and 1a illustrate part of a conventional electron beam tube, indicated generally by the reference numeral 1, the tube having a longitudinal axis 2. The part illustrated in these Figures generally comprises the RF interaction region for the tube incorporating a drift tube assembly. Only one side of the tube is shown in detail in Figure 1a, the components illustrated being approximately symmetrical about the longitudinal axis.

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A mounting plate 3 for the drift tube is shown in Figure 1a. The mounting plate is typically of copper, stainless steel or nickel. A vacuum envelope 4 for the tube is partially defined by a cylindrical wall of RF transparent material, such as alumina. The cylindrical wall 5 is substantially coaxial with the longitudinal axis 2. The

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mounting plate 3 also forms part of the vacuum envelope 4. The cylindrical wall 5 is attached to the drift tube mounting plate 3 in the following manner.

5 An end surface 6 of the wall 5 is metallised and attached by brazing to a flare 7, which is of metallic material such as cupro-nickel. The flare 7 has a portion 8 that abuts the end face of the wall 5, and a transverse portion 9 that may be coaxial with the longitudinal axis 2 of the
10 tube.

The other side of the portion 8 of the flare 7 is attached to an end surface 10 of a ceramic balance ring 11 in a like fashion. The ceramic balance ring is coaxial with
15 the wall 5. The other end surface 12 of the balance ring 11 is located in a recess 13 in the mounting plate 3.

The recess 13 also includes an end portion 14 of a second flare 15, the other end portion 16 of which is welded to
20 the transverse portion 9 of the other flare 7.

The inclusion of the ceramic balance 11 ring helps to relieve thermal stresses in the assembly as the temperature of the tube 1 changes during operation.
25 However, it has been found that, in certain circumstances where the temperature difference experienced by the tube is greater than usual, thermally-induced mechanical stress can become unacceptably high.

30 A tube constructed in accordance with the invention is illustrated in Figures 2 and 2a, and is indicated generally by the reference numeral 17. This tube also comprises a cylindrical wall 5, attached to the mounting plate 3 of a drift tube assembly via the intermediary of a
35 balance ring and flares 7, 15.

However, in accordance with the invention, the tube 17 further comprises means, such as member 18, arranged to allow small radial movement of the balance ring with respect to the mounting plate, in order to alleviate thermal stresses on the tube.

In this arrangement, the member 18 is annular and is substantially coaxial with the cylindrical wall 5. The member is interposed between a balance ring 19 and the mounting plate 3. The member 18 is located in the recess 13 of the mounting plate and is held in location by atmospheric forces acting upon the tube when the interior has been evacuated to produce a vacuum.

The member 18 comprises material arranged to provide reduced friction between the balance ring 19 and the mounting plate 3. Preferably, the member has a lower coefficient of friction than both the balance ring and the mounting plate. Alternatively, a member coated with or loaded with friction-reducing material may be provided. As a further alternative, a layer of friction-reducing material may be substituted for the member 18. A plurality of friction-reducing members may be provided between the balance ring and the mounting plate.

This means arranged to allow radial movement of the balance ring with respect to the drift tube assembly may alternatively, or additionally, be interposed between other components of the tube, in order to further reduce stress experienced overall by the tube assembly. The invention has particular merits when the means is interposed between components having different coefficients of thermal expansion.

A tube assembly typically comprises a plurality of ceramic walls alternating with metallic structures, such as a plurality of drift tube assemblies. Therefore, a plurality of members 18, for example, may be located
5 between each ceramic and metallic component to provide relative radial movement of those components.

The invention permits the balance ring to move radially in order to alleviate the forces caused by differential
10 thermal expansion of components of the tube. The member moves in a sliding motion, thereby maintaining the integrity of the vacuum envelope. Thus, a tube constructed according to the invention can be operated under substantially more onerous conditions than were
15 feasible hitherto.

The invention is particularly applicable to arrangements in which the balance ring is of ceramic and the mounting plate or electrode is a hard metal such as nickel. In
20 such circumstances, the ceramic balance ring can bind on the surface, which can cause stresses and cracking. The use of the member as described allowing the balance ring to slide overcomes this problem.